GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:877
ANSWERED ON:31.07.2006
FOREST COVER
Mahajan Smt. Sumitra

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether in the context of Indian climate one-third of Indian geographical area should be forest covered for environmental balance;

(b) if so, the national average and the percentage of forest cover in the different States of the country alongwith their total area of forest land; and

(c) the steps proposed/being taken by the Government to bring all the States at par with the projected 33% forest cover?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIORNMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

(a) As per the National Forest Policy, 1988, a minimum of one-third of the total land area of the country should be under forest or tree cover. In the hills and in mountainous regions, the aim should be to maintain two-third of the area under such cover in order to prevent erosion and land degradation and to ensure the stability of the fragile eco-system.

(b) The percentage of forest cover in different States and Union Territories of the country along with their total forest cover and the recorded forest area, as per State Forest Report (SFR), 2003, published by Forest survey of India is given in the Annexure. The National average of forest cover and recorded forest area are 20.64 percent and 23.57 percent respectively, of total geographical area of the country.

(c) The steps undertaken by the Government to increase the forest cover in the country are:

(i) Legal measures like Indian Forest Act, 1927, Wild Life Protection Act, 1972, Forest Conservation Act, 1980 and Environmental Protection Act, 1986 and the rules, guidelines thereof.

(ii) Management measures like working of forests according to approved working plans etc.

(iii) Financial measures like providing assistance to the State/Union Territories under Centrally Sponsored Schemes and externally aided projects for undertaking afforestation programmes and protection & conservation of forests.

(iv) A network of protected areas has been established.

(v) The National Afforestation Programme (NAP) Scheme is being implemented through two-tier mechanism - Forest Development Agencies at the Forest Division Level and Joint Forest Management Committee at the village level.

(vi) The 12th Finance Commission has recommended for a grant of Rs. 1,000 crores for the period 2005-2010, to be given to the States and Union Territories in addition to what the States would be spending through their Forest Departments i.e. in addition to the normal expenditure of the Forest Department.